

#### 4. Learning How Christ Made Us Alive

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray for others. We also saw that we want to help them understand that they are praying to the One who has all authority and is able to answer their prayers as He chooses. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children understand more fully what Christ did for them when He gave them spiritual life.

Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Here, we see that we want to help our children understand that before they placed their faith in Christ, although they had physical life, they were spiritually dead. God told Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Here, we see that God said that the very day that they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would die.

In Genesis 3:6, we see that Adam and Eve sinned. Genesis 3:7-8 tells what happened immediately, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Here, we see that they experienced immediate spiritual death. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the spirit. Spiritual death is separation of man from God. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were separated from God and tried to cover themselves. When that did not work, they hid themselves. They also immediately experienced other consequences of sin including fear, guilt and shame and then they began to blame.

Here, in Ephesians 2:1, we see that God reverses the first effect of original sin at the moment we repent of our sin of unbelief and place our faith in Christ. We are made alive spiritually because we are no longer dead in our trespasses and sins. Adam and Eve passed their sin nature on to all of their descendants except Christ. As you remember, the angel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. As a result, Christ had a divine nature instead of a sin nature. At the moment of salvation, Christ makes us alive and also gives us a new nature. That is why every true believer has a desire to do what is right and pleasing in the sight of God. New believers need help to come to understand that the only way they can carry out those new desires is as they yield to the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

Ephesians 2:2-3 goes on to tell us how we walked before we received that new nature. Those verses say, “In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” When we were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins, we walked according to the course of this world. The phrase “the course of this world” speaks of the world system that is controlled by Satan and is opposed to God

and His Word as well as all those who choose to place their faith in Christ. That is why to walk according to “the course of this world” also means that we walk according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan).

We also see how we all lived and acted when we were following Satan and the actions of the world around us. We see that Satan is also called the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. This is a reminder that Satan was a spirit or angel until the time when pride took control of him and he led one third of the angels to rebel against God and become evil spirits or demons. Satan is the one who blinds people to spiritual truth. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” Before we placed our faith in Christ, each one of us was following Satan and we were the sons of disobedience.

When we were the sons of disobedience, we all conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh. This means our actions showed that we were living to satisfy the sinful desires of our flesh. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” This verse tells us that we chose to satisfy the sinful desires of our flesh. We also chose to satisfy the sinful desires of our eyes. We were also controlled by the sin of pride.

We see that in addition to walking in these sins, we also were fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The word translated “desires” means what *we wish or what we have determined will be done*. Here, we see that our actions were determined by our thoughts. James 1:14-15 says, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Before we placed our faith in Christ, we were controlled by our sin nature that was filled with evil desires. The word “entice” means *to catch by bait*. Satan always tries to make sin look attractive because that is his bait to deceive us. Once desire has taken control of our mind, the sin has already happened. Then, it is carried out by our actions. However, the final result of that sin is not the pleasure that Satan used to deceive us. Instead, the final result is death.

That is why we were called the children of wrath. Following a list of sins in the earlier verses, Ephesians 5:6 says, “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Every person who has not repented of the sin of unbelief and placed their faith in Christ is still a child of wrath. John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Satan had already been judged and those who continue to follow him will also share in his eternal judgment. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Those who continue to be children of wrath will share this judgment with Satan for all eternity.

We can be very thankful that Ephesians 2:4-7 goes on to say, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the

exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Here, we see that God is rich in mercy. “Mercy” means that *God has provided salvation by Christ and offers that salvation to people as a free gift.* Here, we see that God showed His riches by offering that mercy to all who will come to him by repenting of their sin of unbelief and coming to God through Christ. The mercy of God shows the greatness of the love that God has for us.

We see that God chose to show that love while we were dead in trespasses and sins. Romans 6:4-7 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.” Here, we see that God chose to do away with the body of sin that we had in our lives when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. To do that, God saved us by His grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” We have been set free from the bondage of sin by the grace of God.

In addition, we also see that God has raised us up from spiritual death to spiritual life. The verses that we just quoted from Romans 6 show us that is why it is possible for us to walk in newness of life. However, this spiritual life does much more than just make it possible for us to walk in newness of life. Here, we see that it also means that in the sight of God we are also now sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Although we are not with Christ in heavenly places yet since we are still here on this earth, God has made that future so certain that He already views us as being in the heavenly places with Christ.

We can also look forward to that day when we will be with Christ in the heavenly places for all eternity. The Father is eager for that day because He wants to show us the exceeding riches of His grace. The Father also wants us to fully understand that this kindness has been provided for us through the kindness of Christ that caused Him to go to the cross and have all of our sins placed on Him. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Here, we see that it was the kindness of Christ that gave us spiritual life and made it possible for us to be healed and set free from the penalty of sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand clearly how Christ made us alive when we were dead in trespasses and sins. That will help them to grow in their understanding of the peace of God that passes all understanding and keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand how Christ gave us spiritual life.